



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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## **GOVERNOR NAMES TASK FORCE TO STUDY FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAM** *STATE'S "WELFARE TO WORK" PROGRAM WORKING TOWARDS GREATER SUCCESS*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— Governor Phil Bredesen today announced the creation of a task force to study Tennessee's welfare-to-work program, Families First. The 2004 Families First Task Force is made up of social services experts, service providers and former clients.

In 1996, the federal government replaced the welfare entitlement program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Just prior to the TANF legislation's passage, Tennessee was granted a waiver and allowed to create its own unique welfare reform program called Families First. The program fits the needs of individual citizens with its focus on education, training and personal responsibility. Families First, like "welfare" programs in all the states, provides a cash benefit with supportive services to families with children who are experiencing financial difficulties.

"Families First has enabled thousands of Tennesseans to become self-sufficient," said Governor Bredesen. "However, we have been in the program seven years, and the time has come to see where we can make some changes and help even more Tennesseans become self-sufficient, tax-paying citizens. In addition, we are facing the upcoming reauthorization of the TANF legislation and the end of our waiver in 2007. We need to begin preparing now to be ready to conform to the federal program's requirements when the time comes."

The Department has received national recognition for its work in moving people to employment, finding them child care and offering specialized programs that help clients overcome barriers.

"We are very proud of Families First and all it has done for thousands of Tennessee families," said Human Services Commissioner Virginia T. Lodge. "We are confident this task force will look at our best practices, as well as those from other states, and make this an even stronger program."

Since its creation, Families First has served more than 200,000 families. The program is currently serving more than 70,000 families and 140,000 children.

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The following individuals are serving on the task force:

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Social Worker  
Metro Social Services  
Nashville

Dr. Judith A. Hammond  
Assistant VP for Community Outreach  
East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City

Jacqueline Holloway  
Member  
Statewide Families First Advisory Council  
Oak Ridge

Mai Bell Hurley  
Chair  
Statewide Families First Advisory Council  
Chattanooga

Ed Lake  
Deputy Commissioner  
TN Department of Human Services  
Nashville

Reverend Herbert Lester, Jr.  
Senior Minister  
Centenary United Methodist Church  
Memphis

Lafayette McKinnie  
WIA Director  
Southwest Human Resource Agency  
Henderson

Linda C. Moynihan  
Executive Director  
Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare  
Nashville

Elizabeth Newton  
Employment Career Specialist/Formal Client  
University of Tennessee Wave  
Knoxville

Bonita Payne  
Former Client  
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Glenda Shearon  
Assistant Commissioner Adult & Family Services  
TN Department of Human Services  
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Dr. Pearl Sims  
Director  
Leadership Development Center  
Peabody College of Vanderbilt University  
Nashville

Dixie Taylor-Huff  
Owner/Administrator  
Quality Care Health Center  
Lebanon

Regina Walker  
Senior Vice President for Community Initiatives  
United Way of the Mid-South  
Memphis

For more information on the Families First Program, visit the DHS website at:  
<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/famfir.htm>

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